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FRIENDLY DIALOGUE:

BETWEEN

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A COMMON UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN, AND
AN ATHANASIAN; OCCASIONED BY THE
FORMERS'S BEHAVIOUR DURING SOME
PART OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

O R,

AN ATTEMPT TO RESTORE
SCRIPTURE FORMS OF WORSHIP.

Jesus answered; the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: there is none other commandment greater than these. MARK xii. 29, 30, 31.

When ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.

LUKE xi. 2.

L O N D O N:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following little tract being now reprinted by the editor, with very considerable alterations, it is no more than justice to the author to say, that he is no longer answerable for the contents of it. His learning, and his christian spirit and temper, deserve all praise; his name is not mentioned, but his works will follow him.

J. D.

January 1st.
1784.

*The original Author is M^r Hopkins author
of the appeal to common sense
The Editor is D^r Binney*



P R E F A C E.

The following Dialogue is designed for the use of common Christians, who, by experience, are found competent judges of the doctrine here contended for, when it is delivered in its native simplicity, as it was first preached by Christ and his apostles. Plain scripture-facts are adapted to all capacities, and cannot be overthrown by all the learned sophistry in the world. It is to be hoped, that there are amongst us many rational Christians, who will distribute such little tracts, in order to help forward the glorious work of another reformation, which, though the times are favourable in many respects, is very much obstructed by irreligion on one side, and superstition and enthusiasm on the other.

P R E F A C E

The following Dialogue is designed for the use of common Christians who, by experience, are found competent judges of the value of the work, when it is delivered in its native simplicity, as it was first presented by Christ and his apostles. Plain language is everywhere adapted to all capacities and cannot be over-estimated by all who are engaged in this work. It is to be hoped that there are among us many rational Christians, who will be anxious to help forward the glorious work of another reformation, which, though the times are favorable, is many respects, is very much retarded by prejudice on one side, and superstition and dissimulation on the other.

A

FRIENDLY DIALOGUE.

ATHANASIAN. Neighbour, as I always thought you a person of a serious turn of mind, and have frequently observed your exemplary conduct in the public worship, your behaviour this day, at church, gave me great surprize, and indeed uneasiness, because you seemed to treat some parts of our excellent liturgy with disregard. You used to repeat, after the minister, the four first petitions of the litany, in a devout and solemn manner; and to join in every part of our liturgy, so justly celebrated by great numbers of pious and learned men. But I took notice this day, at church, you put on a silent indifference, when *God the Son, God the holy Ghost*, and the *three persons* in the Trinity were invoked; neither did you seem to give your assent to the doxology, so frequently directed, to *Father, Son, and holy Ghost*: You seemed likewise not to join in the latter end of those prayers, which conclude with the doctrine of the Trinity in unity, so plainly and solemnly estab-

lished by our glorious church, and confirmed by the learned pains of many excellent writers. I should be glad to know the true reason of this surprizing change; and make no doubt but you will readily explain yourself upon religious points, as you and I have had frequent conferences upon subjects of scripture.

UNITARIAN. Why really, neighbour, I acknowledge the justness of your charge. As my sentiments are very different from those I formerly embraced and was educated in; so I think it my duty to act consistently with my principles, and to profess and practise, in religious matters, according to the dictates of my conscience. There was a little book, published some years ago, under the title of, AN APPEAL TO THE COMMON SENSE OF ALL CHRISTIAN PEOPLE, &c. written by a *country clergyman*. And since then, another small tract entitled, AN APPEAL TO THE SERIOUS AND CANDID PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY *: these I have carefully read, considered, and compared with scripture, and more particularly with regard to the article of religious worship, which is of a practical nature; and profess myself deeply convinced, by the express determination of Christ and his apostles, that the church-worship offered up to Jesus Christ, the messenger of God, and to the holy Spirit; and to the Trinity, as being three persons, and one God, is

*The third and last edition of the *Appeal to Common Sense*, was published 1775, by Mr Johnson, in St. Paul's Church-Yard; where also is sold, the *Appeal to the Professors of Christianity*. Price 2d.

is false and unscriptural; from whence, I think, it necessarily follows, that the famous Athanasian doctrine of three co-equal persons in one God, has no foundation in the word of God.

ATHANASIAN. Oh, my friend! you astonish me by such a bold declaration; and I beg of you, for the sake of your future happiness, to take heed, and beware how you run into a dangerous heresy, before you have weighed this important business with a cool and unprejudiced mind. What! is it possible to imagine that so many wise and good men should have been so grievously mistaken, as to be guilty of false worship in their solemn addresses to almighty God? Don't you know, that our liturgy was compiled by pious and learned men; and that it has been celebrated by several excellent writers, as the most perfect and christian form of public devotion in the whole christian world? You should, therefore, suspect, that these authors have imposed on your judgment by some delusive arts, when their arguments have a tendency to draw you off from an important part of religious worship, settled and determined by the venerable fathers of the church of England, established by decrees of parliament and convocation, and strongly enforced by a pious and learned clergy.

UNITARIAN. I am obliged to you, my good friend, for your advice, as I am well assured it proceeds from a kind regard for my spiritual welfare. But I can seriously declare, that my conviction has not been hasty: in the course of my inquiry, I made all possible objections to the doctrines

doctrines delivered in both these APPEALS, for the very reasons you assign; and I thought it strange and unaccountable, that such an excellent church should have continued so long in an error that breaks in upon the true character of the one God and Father of all, and the holy and only worship admitted, practised, and directed by Christ and his apostles. And in order to convince you of my sincerity in this grand affair, I must acquaint you that I sent for several answers to these publications, which have been written by learned persons; and have also carefully examined some defences of them. Upon the most sincere and impartial inquiry, not without earnest applications to the God of truth, for the direction of his holy spirit in my religious disquisitions, I profess myself an Unitarian Christian, or a firm believer in one supreme God and Father of all, as a principle of natural as well as revealed religion. I see with my own eyes, and perceive with my own understanding, that it is my duty to worship and pray to the one God and Father of all, in the name of, or as the disciple of Jesus Christ, for the assistance of his holy spirit and guidance; and think it lawful to offer up petitions to none other except the invisible and self-existent creator and governor of the world, the one only living and true God. As our Lord commanded no worship or prayer to be made to himself, and directed his apostles and others, to pray only to God, our Father, who is in heaven; and they taught their disciples the same: surely, to pay religious worship to any other, must

must be judged, by every unprejudiced christian, as an instance of will-worship, not warranted by the word of God; and, consequently, such unscriptural forms of devotion ought to be laid aside, though established by the authority of wise and learned men. With respect to the worship of the Trinity in unity, or three persons and one God, not even the least colour of evidence can be produced for it: every form of worship set forth by Christ and his apostles is absolutely inconsistent with it. It is certainly worshiping God, under a false character, or *we know not what*, John iv. 22. when we offer up prayers to a Being consisting of three co-equal persons, contrary to the light of reason and scripture; and I am afraid this religious practice too nearly approaches to the crime of some degree of idolatry, as no such Being exists in the universe.

ATHANASIAN. Surely you must labour under some very great mistake, when you make such confident declarations regarding forms of worship, that have been deduced from scripture by so many learned men; and have been defended in so many excellent books, written by persons of almost every denomination of christians, as well as of the church of England. Have you, my friend, carefully examined every part of scripture relating to religious worship? Have not the authors of these APPEALS, concealed some considerable evidence, in order to gain their cause? Though my memory, at present, does not furnish me with any particular passages, where the second, third and fourth petitions of the litany are found in express terms; yet I
am

am persuaded that these forms of worship are warranted by scripture, as our church, which professes the highest regard for scripture, and is founded upon it, has so long recommended and enforced the whole litany-worship : and you must allow, that the church of England has been blessed with many excellent members, remarkable for their piety, as well as learning : and, consequently, I cannot think of departing from their religious sentiments, without the clearest and strongest evidence, drawn from the word of God.

UNITARIAN. We of this nation ought to bless God for the inestimable advantages of the free use of the holy scriptures in the vulgar tongue. In the name of God, let every declaration of Christ and his apostles, relating to religious worship, be examined and considered with the greatest care ; and let this important cause be determined by divine, and not human authority. I can sincerely tell you a plain matter of fact, that after having very accurately compared the new Testament, with the collection of texts relating to religious worship in both these APPEALS, I could not find one passage omitted ; so that the authors of them cannot be charged with concealing any part of the evidence, in order to gain their cause, according to the too common practice of party-writers.

My good friend, do but admit, as your protestant profession, and your seeming regard for scripture requires, that the authority of Christ and his apostles is of greater weight than the decrees of even wise and learned men, and you will

will soon be convinced that the Athanasian, or Trinitarian worship is false, and unscriptural. I will endeavour to point out to you a plain method of gaining entire satisfaction upon this important subject.—*It came to pass that as he (viz. Christ) was praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. (Luke xi. 1.)* Now, the grand question is, what answer our Lord made to this reasonable inquiry? For surely it is the duty of every christian to pay a very solemn regard to the determination of Christ himself.—*And he (viz. Christ) said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven, &c. (v. 2.)* This is exactly agreeable to the precept he gave in his sermon on the mount; *after this manner pray ye: Our Father, who art in heaven, &c. (Mark vi. 9.)* It appears then that our Saviour has plainly commanded all his disciples to worship the one God and Father of all, without any mention of himself, or of the holy spirit of God, as objects of worship.

ATHANASIAN. Your producing the Lord's prayer is, I think, unnecessary, as all christians are uniformly agreed in it; and this prayer frequently occurs in every part of our public service.

UNITARIAN. But it is proper to begin with a point universally agreed upon, in order to proceed, in a regular manner, to the examination of those points wherein we differ. Though the Lord's prayer is so familiar to you, by frequent use, yet it is very possible that you, and thousands, might not have attended to the consequences,

quences, naturally arising from this divine and comprehensive prayer.

In the next place, I recommend to your serious consideration, part of a discourse our Lord, delivered to his disciples, just before he was going to suffer a painful and scandalous death.—*In that day ye shall ask me nothing: Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitberto have ye asked nothing in my name. At that day ye shall ask in my name.* (John xv. 23, 24, 26.) Be pleased to take particular notice, that our Lord hath, in these declarations, plainly set forth the true christian form of worship, which is no other than to worship the one God and Father of all, in the name of, and as the disciples of Jesus Christ.

But here I must earnestly desire you to consider, what foundation there is, for the worship of Jesus Christ, or the holy Spirit of God, or three persons in one God. 'Tis impossible for the art of man to find it out, in these plain declarations of our Saviour, when he was professedly delivering the duty of his disciples, with regard to the true object of religious worship.

ATHANASIAN. I freely grant you that the church-worship does not appear in this discourse of our Saviour. But does he not promise his disciples to send the holy Spirit to guide them into all truth? From whence it is not improbable to conclude, that some particulars were to be revealed to them after the descent of the holy Spirit, which our Lord did not think proper

to communicate to them in person ; so that if the church-worship be rightly deduced from the declarations of the inspired apostles, it will yet stand upon a scripture-foundation.

UNITARIAN. Let us, for the present, keep to our Saviour's last discourse to his disciples. If the true character of God be, a Being consisting of three co-equal persons, and it is our duty to worship him under this character, is it possible to imagine, that our Lord should take no notice of such an essential part of our religious service ? As no such worship can be deduced from this, or any other discourse of our Saviour, it must certainly be given up, as false and unscriptural, unless the apostles, after the descent of the holy Spirit, have made it our express duty, by clear precepts, or example.

But the matter of fact is demonstrated, even to eye-sight, that the apostles offered up their usual and stated devotions to God only, through Jesus Christ. *They lift up their voice to God, saying, Lord, thou art God,—grant that—wonders may be done by the name of thy holy servant Jesus.* (Acts iv. 24, 30.) *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Cor. xv. 57.) The precepts relating to worship, in the epistles, are to this effect.—*Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him,* (Coloss. iii. 17.) In the review of all the forms of worship in the new Testament, will appear demonstrative evidence, that the worship of Christ, and the holy Spirit, is no where warranted by the practice or

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precepts

precepts of the apostles: and so gross and absurd is the worship of three persons and one God, that they have not left us the most distant intimation of any such religious practice; which you will readily perceive, when you have carefully examined all their declarations relating to the duty of worship. If it had been the will of God, that the disciples of Christ should have worshipped one God, under the character of three persons, it would have been as plainly set forth in the new Testament, as it is in the liturgy of the church of England: and consequently, the Athanasian forms of worship must appear, to all sincere Bereans, false and unscriptural, as being destitute of all support from the directions of Christ and his apostles.

ATHANASIAN. But surely the great power and authority of Christ, who is so frequently joined together with the Father, as also the high offices which the holy Spirit sustains; and both of them being sometimes mentioned, together with the Father, as concerned in the great work of our salvation, afford good grounds for the direct invocation of them in prayer or praise; particularly, as we are commanded to be baptized into the name of the Son and holy Spirit, as well as of the Father. (Matt. xxviii. 19.) And the apostolical benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) seems to imply worship to the Son and holy Spirit.

UNITARIAN. That the Son is employed by God in very high offices for the salvation of mankind, every christian must readily grant, with joy and gratitude: and the promised assistance

ance of the holy Spirit, is also deserving of our thankfulness. As God Almighty sent Christ to preach and make known the terms of salvation to the world; so after he had completed the gracious work by God assigned him, he received a commission to send down the holy Spirit upon the apostles, to enable them to propagate the gospel through the world. the comfortable assistance of the same holy Spirit of God, (that is, his guidance and protection) is likewise promised to all sincere christians in the discharge of their most difficult duties. Upon this account, the disciples of Christ are commanded to be baptized into the name of the Son and holy Spirit, as well as of the Father. Being baptized into the name of the holy Spirit; or, into the belief of the extraordinary guidance and direction of the holy Spirit, which was given to the apostles, cannot be of the like import, with addressing ourselves to the same in prayer and praise. When this famous text in St. Matthew is cited, the words immediately foregoing should always be added, as being necessary to complete the sense. *All power, (that is, all power relating to the gospel-dispensation,) is given unto me in heaven, and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit: (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.)* and consequently, the Father is mentioned as the giver of that power, the Son as the person to whom that power is given, and the holy Spirit, as the blessing of God accompanying our endeavours, and the effectual means of our supporting

our christian warfare. This power of which Christ speaks, is that which he, in other words, calls the holy Spirit; and therefore the Father is mentioned as the giver of that power, and the Son as the person by whom it is given. This seems to be the true scriptural account of this passage, about which there have been so many angry disputes, but concerning which you, and every one, must judge for himself.

The other text you mention, (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) is no more than a solemn wish of St. Paul, that the favor of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the holy Spirit, or joint partaking in the divine assistance, might be and continue with the Corinthians. But I refer you to every thing relating to this text, fairly discussed in the APPEALS before mentioned.

As to any doxology, or the ascribing of glory to the person of the holy Spirit, it is not even pretended, by learned men, that one instance of it can be produced from scripture. The new Testament lies open before you, and you may see with your own eyes, whether the common church-doxology be there or not,—*Glory be the Father, and to the Son, and to the holy Ghost.* The scripture-doxologies are to this effect: *Glory be to God through Jesus Christ.*—*Blessing, &c. be unto him that sitteth upon the throne,* (viz. the one supreme God) *and unto the Lamb,* (that is, God's holy and innocent creature, and great instrument employed by him, for the salvation of mankind,) *for ever and ever.* (Rom. xvi. 27. Rev. v. 13.)

Again,

Again, with respect to the worship of Father, Son, and holy Spirit, as being one God, it is a notorious fact, not to be overthrown, by all the subtle inventions of learned men through the whole Christian world, that this form of worship is so far from being commanded, or authorised by the sacred writer, that the worship there required is absolutely inconsistent with it; the one supreme God, who is generally described by the character of Father, being constantly set forth, as the only object to whom all religious invocation should be directed. Nothing is more easy than for you, or for any other common Christian, to determine this plain question, whether the worship of three persons, and one God be in the new Testament, which you have in your hands, or whether it be not.

ATHANASIAN. To speak impartially, your observations upon this article of religious worship appear to me of considerable weight. If the matter of fact be as you have represented it, and you very fairly refer me to the scripture itself, for my complete satisfaction, I shall be obliged to give up the Athanasian worship, as what cannot be defended by the word of God.

But as worship is paid to Christ in scripture, and glory is expressly ascribed to him, is not this a very strong and conclusive argument, that Christ is equally divine with, or one God with the Father?

UNITARIAN. My good friend, as you begin to see some light and evidence, which you had not observed before, I shall take a particular

pleasure in employing my best endeavours to give you complete satisfaction upon this important article of religious worship. The argument usually urged, by learned men, to prove Christ's supreme divinity, is clearly and solidly answered, by the plain scripture-account of the honor and worship which is to be paid to him, and which surely will be found to be very short of divine worship. By scripture then we learn, that we must *honor the Son, because the Father hath committed all judgment unto him*; (John v. 22, 23.) that we must *confess Christ to be Lord, to the glory of God and Father*, i. e. acknowledge his high authority from God. (Philip ii. 10, 11.)

And more particularly in the Revelation, ch. v. where, in a heavenly vision exhibited before St. John, our Saviour is emblematically described as a Lamb, receiving honors and worship. Be pleased to observe, that the ground of the honors and worship, was not, his being God, equal to the Father; was not, because he was employed by God as an inferior instrument in the creation of the world; but because he was slain, and had redeemed us to God by his blood; *i. e.* he was thought worthy to receive this tribute of blessing and praise, as a reward for his faithful attachment to the cause of God, and his willing sufferings therein, for the benefit of mankind. But this worship paid to this Lamb that was slain, (*i. e.* to a creature, and to a mortal creature, capable of dying,) cannot be divine worship; the worship to be paid to God, cannot be construed into an invocation of

of the holy Jesus in prayer; especially when there is no command in the scriptures for it, given by Christ himself, or, by almighty God: but it must be, that worship, reverence, and respect which we pay to fellow-creatures, our superiors in worth and excellency; worship proportionate to the highly virtuous and pious character of the blessed Jesus, and his benevolence towards us, whenever we think or speak of him; but not to make him God Almighty, in praying to him:

ATHANASIAN. My good friend, it does not become a sincere Christian to withstand the evidence you have, I think, fairly produced from the word of God. The objection I made, is solidly answered, more especially that in the fifth chapter of the Revelation; and I really wonder at myself, and many others, who have not been so convinced before.

UNITARIAN. My dear Christian friend, we ought to make great allowances for each others infirmities, mistakes, and prejudices, naturally arising from various causes. Nothing is more common in human life, than even for thinking persons to receive information about things seemingly plain and obvious, and which may have escaped their notice. But the readiness you shew to submit to evidence, when fairly laid before you, upon religious subjects, proceeds from an excellent temper of mind, which naturally qualifies you to receive the truth, as it is in Jesus. As you freely grant that the Athanasian forms of worship must be given up, if the fact be, as I have stated it; I am willing
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to put the whole cause upon this short and important issue. If, upon inquiry, you can point out, by any one plain instance or precept in scripture, that it is the duty of Christians to worship Christ and the holy Spirit, as being each of them God; and three persons as one God, in prayer, or praise: I shall then freely acknowledge myself in a religious error, and shall think myself obliged to return to the church-worship, which I have carefully omitted since the time of my conviction. On the other hand, if you cannot point out any such worship in scripture, by your own concession, you will judge yourself obliged to adhere to scripture-forms of worship, notwithstanding the authority of even wise and learned men; it being an express duty required of Christ's disciples, to *obey God rather than man*.

Let it be observed, that this argument, drawn from the article of worship, and which is adapted to all capacities, absolutely demolishes the Athanasian doctrine, with respect to the worship of the holy Spirit; it being impossible to conceive that this holy Spirit, who is supposed by the Athanasians to be of equal dignity with God the Father, should never have one prayer directed to him, should have no glory ascribed to him, in the writings of the apostles, from whom alone we can receive a faithful account of the Christian dispensation.

Again, how is it possible to imagine that, it was the design of the sacred writers, to fix the belief of Father, Son, and holy Spirit, as being three persons and one God, in the mind of Christians, as they have left us no example of
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any sort of worship, directed to three persons and one God? If this had been a fundamental doctrine of the gospel, we should not only have had it plainly and frequently expressed, but likewise solemn prayers and praises would have been addressed to God, under the character of three co-equal persons; otherwise, the apostles themselves have left us in the dark with regard to an essential part of Christian worship. Can it enter into the heart of any serious Christian to believe in earnest, that it is necessary to salvation to conceive of God, as a Being consisting of three persons, (as it is profanely and absurdly maintained in the Athanasian creed, a creed which ought to be banished from the service of all Christian societies) when the apostles themselves have never made it the duty of Christians to offer up prayers and praises to God, under the Athanasian character; but in all the examples of worship recorded in scripture, almighty God is always addressed, as one supreme intelligent agent, one God, and Father of all? This essential failure in the Athanasian cause has, I find, driven some of its learned defenders into this palpable absurdity, that when we pray to God, under the character of Father, the word *Father*, denotes Father, Son, and holy Spirit; which demonstrates the falsehood of the cause they are labouring to support; it being extremely clear from hence, that they cannot produce one instance of worship to three persons and one God. Otherwise, men of sense and learning would not have recourse to such an expedient, as hath no other tendency,
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but to turn the scripture into ridicule, and expose it to the scoffs of profane and sceptical men.

ATHANASIAN. I freely allow the grand importance of this plain matter of fact, drawn from the article of religious worship. But I would just take notice of a text, that seems to imply the doctrine of a trinity in unity, though no instance of worship paid to such a Being appears in scripture. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these three are one.* 1 John v. 7.

UNITARIAN. Ever since I became acquainted with this subject, it has been matter of serious lamentation to me, that common Christians have been so much imposed upon by the sound of this famous text, which, if written by St. John, is nothing to the purpose, the sense of it being evidently this; that these three are one, as agreeing in the same testimony. But it is a matter of fact, well known to the learned, that it is a spurious, interpolated text, and has been given up, as such, by some Athanasian writers; and consequently, this text ought not to be read, in churches, as the word of God. You may see every thing relating to it faithfully represented, in Sir Isaac Newton's *Letter to Mr. Le Clerc*, in the *Defence of the Appeal to Common Sense*, printed in octavo, 1760, p. 431; and in Mr. Lindley's *Apology*, p. 98.

ATHANASIAN. Without entering into the merits of this question, for which I am not qualified; if some learned professors of the trinity in unity have given up this text as not written by

by St. John *, it must be allowed that no stress should be laid upon so controverted a passage. But, after all the concessions I have made, regarding the article of worship, are there not, in scripture, several high titles and attributes ascribed to the Son and holy Spirit, which surely have a tendency to induce Christians to think them equally divine with the Father?

UNITARIAN. I am persuaded, that if a person, who had never heard of the Athanasian doctrine and worship, was to read the new Testament †, he would be surprised to find that such a doctrine and worship ever prevailed in the Christian world. But to give a direct answer to your objection, drawn from the high titles and attributes ascribed to the Son and holy Spirit. It is no wonder that great things are spoken in scripture of Christ, and the holy Spirit, who are employed by God, in very high offices, for the grand work of man's salvation. But, the sacred writers have taken all imaginable

* Athanasius himself never referred to this text. Luther and Bullinger, at the time of the reformation, omitted it in their German translation of the Bible. Dr. Wall, not caring to trust to such very suspicious authority, commits the proof of his doctrine to other passages. Dr. Waterland gave it up as indefensible. Dr. Jortin calls it a *spurious text*. Dr. Randolph does not quote it in his *Vindication of a Trinity*. And every man who has candidly read what has been written, will reject this text as a notorious interpolation.

† When Job Ben Soloman, the African prince, (who was master of the Arabic, and had acquired a competent knowledge of the English language) was in England, about fifty years ago, and was asked, after reading the new Testament, if he found three Gods there: he replied, "No, no! ONE GREAT GOD, ONE GREAT GOOD GOD."

ble care to secure the supremacy of the one God and Father of all, when they speak in the highest strain of the one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, and the holy Spirit the comforter. With respect to the title of God, in some few passages, ascribed to our blessed Saviour, it is extremely plain, from the old and new Testament, that title is sometimes used in the inferior sense; Moses, magistrates, and angels, being stiled Gods, consistently with the acknowledgment of the supreme God; and Christ himself, in his answer to the Jews, when they charged him with blasphemy, expressly contends for the use of the word *God* in an inferior sense. (John x. 34—36.) But, it is sufficient for my present purpose, to observe in general, that when this, and other high titles and attributes ascribed to Christ, (for the holy Spirit is never expressly stiled God, or Lord,) are collected together, and presented to the reader with all possible advantage, which is frequently done by Athanasian writers; our Lord himself, and his apostles, have assured us, in the most solemn manner, that he, (viz. Christ) RECEIVED his being, high titles, and attributes from God the Father; that God advanced him to high dignity and honor, upon account of his perfect righteousness, and obedience unto death; (see Philip ii. 8, 9, &c.) and that the whole redounds to the glory of God, the Father.

This plain and solemn account effectually overthrows the argument usually drawn from the most pompous recital of our Saviour's high titles and attributes: it being absolutely impossible that

that the supreme God should have any thing *given* him by any being whatsoever. For, according to the unanswerable declaration of St. Paul, *who hath first GIVEN to him, (viz. God,) and it shall be recompensed to him? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever.* (Rom. ii. 35. 36.) From whence it follows, with demonstrative evidence, that Christ, who was *given* by God, who *received his all from God*, is a person, in his most exalted state, inferior to the one supreme God and Father of all. And the argument holds still stronger with regard to the holy Spirit; which was bestowed and sent from heaven, according to Christ's promise, and the commission he had received from his God and Father, to furnish the apostles with extraordinary gifts, and to render them qualified for their important work.

Add to this, that there are, in the new Testament, about *two hundred and forty* passages, wherein Christ is declared to be inferior to almighty God. The expressions relating to this point are plain and clear, incapable of any other sense, without violence and distortion. On the other hand, there is but the sound of *one text*, which seems to set forth Christ's equality with the Father, and the sound is entirely owing to a false translation; (viz Philip. ii. 6.) *Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*; the words should be rendered thus, *who, being in the form of God, (i. e. endowed with divine powers) was not eagerly desirous to be like unto God*; (i. e. to display those powers.)

powers.) Be pleased to read the eleventh verse, and then determine, by the principles of common sense, whether a person equal to the supreme God, can be raised to higher dignity than he was before?

Again, what demonstrates the falsehood of the Athanasian doctrine, beyond a possibility of doubt is, that there are about *forty* passages, wherein the three persons of the trinity are mentioned together, who are sometimes stiled, the *Father, Son, and holy Spirit*; or, *the Father, the Son, and the Spirit*;—*the living God, Christ, the Spirit*;—*God, the Son of God, the holy Spirit*;—*God, the Lord, the Spirit*. But not one passage appears, where the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, are said to be the one God, as determined in the Athanasian creed. On the other hand, the Father is called *God, the living God*, and sometimes *the one God*, expressly distinguished from the Son and holy Spirit. You must, in this place, either give up the plain declarations of scripture, or the Athanasian doctrine, they being, when fairly compared together, absolutely inconsistent with each other.

I will conclude with a plain scripture-fact, relating to the character of the supreme God. There are in the new Testament *four hundred and forty one* passages, wherein God, the Father, is stiled *the one*, or *only God*, or *God* absolutely, by way of eminence and supremacy; or God, with some peculiar high titles, epithets, or attributes. Upon the whole, the sacred writers have taken all imaginable care to main-
tain

tain the supremacy of the *one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all*; it proceeding entirely from his boundless love and mercy, that his Son was given for our redemption, and his spirit for our sanctification.

ATHANASIAN. I heartily thank you, my good friend, for the pains you have taken to set me right on this important point. I cannot help acknowledging that you proceed in a rational way, and that your arguments seem justly drawn from scripture, interpreted by reason. If there be such a number of texts in the new Testament, clearly setting forth the sense you have contended for, under the three last heads of your discourse, the Athanasian cause is certainly demolished. Surely it must have cost you a vast deal of time and labour to collect such a number of texts, and range them in proper order. I am determined to give the new Testament a serious review, and to take particular notice of all those passages, that refer to God the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit. And, if upon such impartial examination, as I shall be able to make, I find your facts truly represented, and your reasoning conclusive, I shall think it my duty to profess my conviction, though it should contradict the practice, and sentiments of wise and learned men, whose authority, I own, has hitherto had too much influence on my mind.

UNITARIAN. My dear Christian friend, your resolution is wise and good. Nothing is of greater consequence, in the grand business

of religion, than that every person, to whom God has given common sense and reason, should judge and determine for himself, in all points, wherein his duty is concerned. I have the particular satisfaction to reflect, that the more carefully you examine the subject of our debate, the stronger conviction you will receive of the truth of the scripture-facts, I have faithfully set forth. And, as to the reasoning part, it is certainly founded on the principles of common sense, which is the best method of interpreting scripture; or for what end was our reason given to us? or, how can it be better employed, than in exploring the revelation of God?

With respect to the authority of wise and learned men, and the argument drawn from the established liturgy; I find, upon inquiry, that many wise, learned, and good men; and some, whose judgment, upon any question, is of more value than that of thousands, have embraced the unitarian doctrine: and, what deserves particular notice, some of them, who had been educated in the usual Athanasian scheme, afterwards professed the right opinion of God, and his holy worship, in opposition to their worldly interest; and even, since the reformation, suffered imprisonment, banishment, and death.

The memory of our first reformers, ought, without doubt, to be held in very high esteem, upon account of what they did and suffered, in the glorious work of cleansing religion from the foul corruptions of popery: but certain it is, that they did not sufficiently examine the gross opinion of three persons in one God. They too
readily

readily took for granted, what had been settled and determined by the fathers and councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, after the time of Christ; when, persons, acquainted with church-history, assure us, the unity of God, in the plain and literal sense, was first corrupted; and that a superstitious veneration of relicks, and the invocation of saints, immediately followed the corruption.

To speak my mind freely, it is certainly matter of serious lamentation, that such a gross corruption in the pure religion of the holy Jesus, and which laid the foundation of the grand apostacy, has not been long ago banished from the church of England; which, in the most solemn manner, professeth the scripture as the only rule of faith and practice; and, that nothing should be imposed on the consciences of men, but what is warranted by the word of God. It is well known, that this very subject was recommended to the consideration of the most eminent persons in church and state, above seventy years ago, by two very learned, and very eminent divines, viz. Mr. Whiston in his *Primitive Christianity revived*, and Dr. Clarke, in his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*. The latter I procured, and was there surprizingly furnished with all the texts relating to the doctrine of the trinity, reduced under proper heads: and how any Christian can withstand the evidence arising from such a number of texts, (viz. *twelve hundred and fifty one*,) is to me astonishing. Again, there was a particular application made to the governing powers in the justly famous *Free and*

candid Disquisitions, above thirty years ago, in an humble, calm, and christian manner, in order to get the liturgy reformed, according to the standard of the scripture : but nothing has yet been attempted in that glorious cause. And, in the year 1772, application was made to parliament for relief from subscription to human articles of religious faith and doctrine : since which, several of the clergy of the established church have resigned their preferments and ministry therein, rather than continue to officiate, in the public service, against their consciences ; while many, many more, remain behind, groaning and oppressed by their conformity, being yet unable wholly to withdraw themselves. Notwithstanding which, the same corrupt forms are still kept up in the midst of light and knowledge ; and therefore, common Christians are, with the highest reason, called upon to examine, judge, determine, profess, and protest ;—to disregard all public authority, when it stands in competition with the express declarations of Christ and his apostles.

We are daily praying to our heavenly Father that *his name may be hallowed*, that is, that he may be worshipped and adored, as the supreme and only object of the highest reverence and love, of all rational creatures ; and yet, at the same time, we obstinately continue in such false worship as eclipses his supreme honor and glory, in express contradiction to his holy word. We are constantly interceding with almighty God, for the good estate of the catholic church, or, that the church of Christ may

may be universal: that it may be so guided and governed by his good spirit; that all who profess and call themselves Christians, may be led into the way of truth; and, at the same time, we seem determined to hold fast important errors, regarding God and his holy worship, notwithstanding the strongest and clearest light. Upon some occasions, more especially in one of the collects for Good-Friday, we earnestly pray for the conversion of Jews, Turks, and Infidels, and at the end of the very same collect, we inconsistently keep up a religious practice, that is one of the greatest obstacles to their conversion. For it is extremely evident, by all accounts, that neither Jews, nor Mahometans, who are believers of one supreme God, can be converted, whilst they are taught to think, that the doctrine of three persons in one God, and the worship practised in consequence of it, are essential parts of the Christian religion. This can be deemed little else than a solemn mockery of the Almighty, unless we employ our sincere endeavours to effect whatever we pray for; and, I am afraid, will produce mischievous consequences to this church and nation, if no alterations can be obtained from the governing powers.

Since my conviction, I have been naturally led to reflect on the lamentable state of mankind, in almost all ages and countries, with respect to the knowledge of the one true God. Not a great many years after the flood, whereby the immediate finger of the almighty Creator was so remarkably displayed, there was a general revolt of the nations of the earth into a state of gross idolatry :

idolatry : upon which account, the divine Providence chose a particular people, for the glorious purpose of keeping up the knowledge and worship of the one true God ; as this grand principle of all religion, though established by demonstrative evidence in the works of creation, would have been certainly lost, without an extraordinary revelation. And even this chosen people, the history of the old Testament faithfully informs us, frequently fell into idolatry, before the Babylonish captivity, and very seldom continued any considerable time in a steady obedience to the Lord their God. And, happy had it been for the Christian world, if they themselves had never departed from the plain and fundamental article of all true religion, viz. the unity of God, so frequently inculcated in scripture. Moses, the Jewish law-giver, delivers this in the most solemn manner. *Hear, O Israel ! the Lord our God, is one Lord.* (Deut. vi. 4.) And our Saviour, when he was asked by one of the scribes, *which is the first commandment of all ?* confirms the same doctrine by his express authority. *And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel ! the Lord our God is one Lord.* (Mark xii. 28 and 29.) And that this one God, is the Father only, expressly distinguished from the Son and holy Spirit, is as plainly and strongly declared by Christ and his disciples, as it is possible for words to set it forth. Yet, in opposition to the authority of both, who derived their commission from God, it was determined by fallible and presumptuous mortals, between four and five hundred years after Christ, that there are three
supreme

supreme Gods, and, at the same time, that these three supreme Gods, are one God: and whoever will not believe this gross nonsense, and impious contradiction, is doomed to eternal torments. In consequence of this absurd doctrine, it was decreed, that it is the duty of Christians to worship God, under the character of three co-equal persons, without even the least colour of evidence taken from scripture. If this be not such a departure from God and his holy worship, as calls aloud for a reformation, I must despair of understanding the plainest case in matters of religion. But, whether the governing powers will regard their duty in this grand affair, or whether they will not, every particular person, who has gained right notions of God and his holy worship, is indispensibly obliged to profess and practise in exact conformity to the solemn determination of Christ and his apostles, without regarding any worldly inconveniencies that may arise from the rejection of false notions and unscriptural worship*. This is an essential character of Christ's disciples, and required, as an express condition, by our Lord himself. *Who-so-ever shall be ashamed of me, and my words, of him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.* (Luke ix. 26.)

But,

* For forms of public prayer for the use of unitarian Christians, consult "*The Book of Common Prayer, reformed,*" used in the unitarian chapel in Essex street, London; and Dr. Priestley's very late, and very excellent "*Forms of Prayer and other Offices, for the use of unitarian societies.*" both printed for J. Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul's Church-Yard.

But, let it be always remembered, and deeply fixed in our hearts, that right notions of God, and his holy worship, were not intended to amuse our minds with empty speculations; but, to establish a rational correspondence between God, and our own minds, that we may be effectually influenced to reduce to practice, the pure and holy laws of Jesus Christ. If we have gained better, and more rational sentiments of religion than we had before, we are called upon, by still stronger obligations, to *let our light so shine before men, that they may glorify our Father, who is in heaven.* Do we see, by a lively faith, the one supreme God, in his real character, as a Being of all possible perfection, more especially justice, mercy, love, goodness, and every valuable excellence that can attract a reasonable affection? We are then certainly required to love this glorious and amiable Being, with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength; to prefer his favour, before every interest of this mortal state, as being really better than life itself; to raise our minds above every corrupt appetite, and passion; and, to take all possible pains to adorn our lives and actions, with the excellent qualifications of piety, righteousness, charity, sobriety, patience, purity and holiness, which Christ and his apostles have solemnly inculcated, as the necessary terms and conditions of gaining eternal life. On the other hand; very severe threatnings, namely, exclusion from the kingdom of heaven, and a state of great and lasting misery, are denounced against all wilful sinners, who continue such without sincere

sincere amendment and reformation, demonstrated by an uniform course of universal righteousness, to the end of their lives.

ATHANASIAN. My good friend, though you are very zealous in this important cause, yet your zeal is conducted by reason and knowledge. Party-zealots, in the midst of their solicitous concern to settle opinions and religious practices, are too apt to forget, or disregard the Christian obligations to universal charity and holiness of life. I am really convinced, that what you have said, highly deserves the serious consideration of all those who profess themselves disciples of Jesus Christ, and, in earnest, believe the divine authority of the holy scripture. I hope to make a proper use of this religious conference, and to act such a part, in consequence of it, as will be accepted at that solemn time, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

UNITARIAN. I sincerely rejoice, my dear Christian friend, that you are become a Berean, an inquirer for yourself, and resolved to search the scripture with an unprejudiced mind; which excellent temper will, I make no doubt, lead you to a rational satisfaction upon this, and other religious subjects. And may the blessing of the one supreme God, and Father of all, attend your sincere disquisitions.

F I N I S.

... and ...
... to the end of your lives.

ATHANASIUS: My good friend, though you
are very zealous in this important cause, yet
your zeal is conducted by a mistaken knowledge
of the matter. In the midst of their religious
enthusiasm, to which opinions and religious prin-
ciples are the objects of their rage, or disregard the
importance of the cause to which they are
devoted. I am rather convinced that
you have not fully considered the serious
consequences of all those who profess themselves
followers of Jesus Christ, and in extent, I leave
to the wisdom of the holy Synod. I
do not make a proper use of the words, I con-
sider and so forth, a part in consequence
of it, as will be testified at our future time.
I am God shall judge the hearts of men by
the Spirit.

ATHANASIUS: I deeply rejoice, my dear
friend, that you are so zealous in this
cause, and I am glad to hear
of your efforts with an unimpaired spirit, which
I am sure will make no doubt, lead
to a more perfect knowledge of the truth, and
may the blessing
of the Lord be upon you, and I leave of all,
and your future exertions.

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